

### 3. HEBREWS: Why Jesus Is Greater Than Angels

Ps. Johnny Lesnik

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Text: HEBREWS 1:4-14

A few weeks ago, if you remember, we began our study of the Letter to the Hebrews, and we saw how the author went into detail what makes Jesus so special. He covered how Jesus is God's final Word to the World, that Jesus is the heir of all things, the Creator of all things, the Revealer of God's glory and Person, the Sustainer of all things, the Redeemer of Mankind, and the Ruler of all things. And he does this because when this letter was written, there were Hebrew believers who were slipping away from their faith. They were being pressured to return back into Judaism but the author is showing them why Jesus is so much better than what they once knew in Judaism; that Jesus is a better priest, a better mediator, His sacrifice was a better and final sacrifice, the new covenant is better than the old covenant, and how Jesus is superior to everything and everybody.

And something else that was prominent in Judaism.... Were angels. And guess what? Jesus is so much greater than angels too. So, like a good attorney, the author is going to lay out a solid case for WHY Jesus is greater or vastly superior than angels. He presents five arguments. Let's read **Hebrews 1:4-14**. You may be thinking, "What's the big deal? Of course, Jesus is greater than angels. Why even argue the point?"

**Well, let's take a quick look at some Angelology** – a brief study of angels. Man is a wonderful and amazing creation, definitely higher than plants and animals, higher than any other material creation in this world. But there is yet another created group even higher than man.... Angels. **Hebrews 2:9** shows us that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for a while when He became a man. It's only logical that angels have a place that is higher than men. Apart from the fall of the angels, we don't see them being subject to sin. They are holy, powerful, and wise. They don't suffer with sickness that men suffer with. They are specially created spirit beings, made by God before men were ever created, and they were in heaven watching when God was doing the creating, when He made the world. Let me give you some rapid-fire statements about angels.

Angels are spirit beings that don't have flesh and bones like humans, but they do have some sort of body. 1 Corinthians 15:40 says there are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. They are capable of appearing in a human form. In Hebrews 13:2 the Bible says show hospitality to strangers because some have entertained angels unknowingly – referring to the Old Testament when Abram received 3 visitors. In the New Testament, in Matthew 28:2-4, we are told an angel rolled back the stone of the Tomb Jesus was in – and his appearance was like lightening, and he had white clothes. In the Old Testament, we even read of Jacob wrestling with an angel.... So there is some kind of form to them.

**Colossians 1:16-17** implies that angels were create simultaneously, not some here nor some there. We read in **Matthew 22:28-30** that angels do not procreate, they are not man and wife, they don't have little angels, there are no new angels added to the batch. God created a certain number of angels, and even though a great number of them has fallen, the number of them has not changed since they were created. They are not subject to death from our understanding of Scripture. They do not go extinct.

The Old Testament has 108 references to angels, and there are 165 references in the New Testament. Angels were created to render intelligent worship to God, and to serve God. They are intelligent, and they are also emotional. The Bible talks how angels rejoice when sinners are saved. They can speak, we see this numerous times. They have incredible speed and are sometimes pictured with even six wings! Mark 13:32 says their abode is in heaven – or the third heaven which is where God is... and Jude 6 tells us that some of the angels abandoned their proper dwelling, and so God has kept them in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Angels will also be judged.

And there are trillions upon trillions of them evidently.... Even after untold numbers of them fell with Satan, there are still numberless holy angels left. Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 says there are thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand that minister and stand before God. And they have names – three of which are named in Scripture – Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer.

And angels are more powerful than men, and we need to call upon divine power to deal especially with fallen angels. The Bible says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against angels, fallen angels. They are highly organised, divided into ranks, and complex organisations. These can be called thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and authorities. But the holy angels of God minister to God, and they ministered to Christ at the end of His temptation. They minister to the saints. How? They watch the church, they watch over pastors of churches, they help answer prayer, deliver from danger, encourage Christians, and protect little children. And there are also judgment angels – those who announce it and inflict it. That's a brief Biblical course in Angelology to benefit you.

### **JEWISH ANGELOLOGY**

But when Hebrews was written, the Jewish people had a little bit of a different view on angels. Their views began to wander from the basic Old Testament context because of the writings of the Talmud and the feelings and ideas of the Rabbis – so they came up with some interesting views and concepts of angels.... And this is the backdrop against which the author is writing. They believed angels were the next highest beings next to God. That they mediated between men and God. That angels were the beings who are the instruments in bringing God's word and working God's will in our universe and our lives. They believed that angels were created, they did not eat or drink, and that there were no little angels. So far, those points are good, but now there are some wacky ideas that they also had.

They believed that angels were God's senate, and that God never did anything without asking the angels. They were His council. When God said in Genesis, "Let us make man", they believe that God was speaking to His senate of angels, and that some objected to creating man, and that God annihilated those angels for their objection. Some believe that this senate of angels objected to the giving of the Law, and so they attacked Moses on the way up Mount Sinai. They even named 7 angels who are always in the presence of God. They believe there were 200 angels that controlled the movements of the stars and kept things on course. That there is a super-angel who controls the calendar and seasons, another that takes care of the seas, angels of frost, dew, rain, snow, hail, thunder, and lightning. That there are angels who were the wardens of Hell and who torture those in hell. That there are angels who record every single word every man has ever spoken. That there is an angel of death, every child has a guardian angel, and one rabbi said that "every blade of grass has its angel". So, the point is.... these people believed in angels!

But most importantly, the Jewish people had a high and lofty view of angels, and specifically that the old covenant and the Old Testament was brought to them from God by angels. Acts 7:51-53: 51 "You stiff-necked people! ... you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."

And indeed, some believed in angels to the extent that they actually worshipped angels. This developed into a heresy known as Gnosticism, that with other things, involved worshipping angels, and Gnosticism reduced Jesus Christ to an angel. That's why Paul writes in Colossians 2:18 – "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind." Paul says, "Don't get trapped into worshipping angels, or venerating them, or focusing on them."

And so, it's against this backdrop that the author of Hebrews has to show that if Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, and is above all... then he also has to show that Christ is better and more superior to angels. If angels were considered second to God, then we need to see why Jesus is above angels and should be followed. And that is the purpose of the author from verses 4-14. And he does it by using seven Old Testament passages to verify it.

### **Quoting from the Septuagint**

Something that is worth knowing before we get into it, is that the author of Hebrews quotes from seven Old Testament passages.... But if you were to go read them in your Old Testament, you will see that the passages are not quoted exactly. There is a slight variation and there is a good reason for this. When Hebrews was written, there had existed a book called the Septuagint. This was the Old Testament translated into Greek. It was often titled the LXX, which is Roman for 70, because around 250 years before Christ, there is the story of 70 Jewish men who got together and translated the old Hebrew into Greek, and that is the Septuagint. So, the author of Hebrews must be a Greek-culture individual, because He quotes the Old Testament from the Septuagint, or the Greek translation, which varies a little bit from the Hebrew translation. The truth isn't different, nor the meaning – but only the phrase, or the word choice – because He is quoting the Septuagint. And this is one of the reasons why Paul is most likely not the author of Hebrews, because Paul would quote the Old Testament more from the Hebrew than from the Septuagint.

So, let's begin seeing what the author says about why Jesus is superior to angels and therefore should be held in much higher esteem.

### **1. JESUS HAS A GREATER NAME THAN THE ANGELS**

We read, "He became as much superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs." So we begin with the argument that Jesus is better or superior to angels. Just be aware that this verse has been used by many cults to show that Christ was created or made – because in some translations it reads, "Being made superior..." but the point here is not that Christ was made or created, but rather that He at one point was not superior to the angels – which was when He took on flesh, humanity, He was lower than the angels. Remember, Philippians 2:6-11, He made Himself nothing, became a servant, became a man, He humbled Himself and died on a cross. But then God exalted Him to the highest place, and gave Him the name that is above every name – this is Christ's exaltation.

I mentioned earlier, there are only three angels named in the Bible – Michael the archangel, whose name means "who is like God". Gabriel whose name means "God is great". And a fallen angel, Lucifer, whose name meant "morning star." But name of Jesus is greater than the name of any angel. It means "God saves" or "Yeshua saves." Don't you love the name Jesus? I love that old song, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that name. Master, Saviour, Jesus—like the fragrance after the rain. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there's something about that name." So the Holy Spirit now shows why Jesus has the greatest name.

### **2. JESUS IS GOD'S SON; ANGELS ARE GOD'S SERVANTS**

He references (1) Psalm 2:7: which says, "I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father." And also (2) 2 Samuel 7:14, "I will be His father, and He will be my Son." In both instances, the author is saying, to which angel has God ever said, "You are my Son"? The answer is ZERO. Remember, these Hebrew readers were being told by false teachers that Jesus was just a powerful angel, but certainly not God. Many false voices tell us this same message today – that Jesus was just a great teacher, a great prophet, but not God.

But this writer says Jesus was not an angel, or some other lower being, but the Son of God – and God the Father calls Him Son. I love Matthew 3:16 when Jesus was baptised, He came up out of the water and it says the Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased”, and also at His transfiguration in Luke 9:35, “A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.” Angels are never called God’s Son.

In the Old Testament in a few places, they were referred to as sons of God – in Genesis and Job, and it refers to them collectively, or as an angelic host, or divine assembly – but the fundamental difference is that Jesus is not just a son of God, but that He is the eternal, unique Son of God – having the same divine nature as the Father. No angel is ever called a Son of God. Do you see the difference and why Jesus is so much more superior? And let’s not forget that the main role of angels is to serve. They serve God, and Hebrews 1:14 says they also serve those who will inherit salvation. So, be sure your focus is not to go looking for angels - look to Jesus, God’s Son!

### **3. JESUS IS WORSHIPPED; ANGELS WORSHIP HIM**

Next, the Holy Spirit then says in verse 6, “When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’” I’ll touch upon the firstborn aspect in a moment, but notice concerning Jesus, it says all angels are to worship Him. This is quoted from (3) Psalm 97:7 – “worship Him all you gods”, and in the Septuagint this reads “angels”. And also in Deuteronomy 32:43 the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls had a line that read, “Rejoice, O heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him.”

Now, angels should never be worshipped. But we know there was a dangerous practice in the early church concerning the worship of angels. In Colossians 2:18, Paul warns to stay away from false believers who require you to practice asceticism, worship angels, or depend on strange visions. Remember how John, in Revelation, twice he fell down overwhelmed to worship the angel, but the angel had a holy fit and said, “Don’t worship me! I’m just an angel. Worship God!” When Jesus was here, the Magi came, brought Him gifts, and worshipped Him. When Jesus walked on water and stepped into the boat, the disciples worshipped Him. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday, the people worshipped Him with palm branches shouting, “Hosanna”. The Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke the people for worshipping Him, and He said, “If they keep quiet, even these rocks would cry out!” When Satan tempted Him that he would give Jesus all the riches and kingdoms of this world if only Jesus would bow and worship Satan, Jesus quoted Deut. 6:13, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” So if only God is worthy to be worshipped, and angels say to only worship God, and Jesus accepted worship, what would that make Him? God. So put your eyes on Jesus and worship Him.

Let me just say about the firstborn part here... this is where people jump up and down and say, “See, Jesus is a created being... He’s begotten like all the rest of us.” Col. 1:15 also says, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” But this has nothing to do with being created, but everything to do with rank, the chief one, the one with the right-to-rule. An excellent definition of firstborn is Gen 49:3: “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honour, excelling in power.” Jacob and Esau is an example here also... Jacob was not the firstborn in order, he was born second, but he was the firstborn in his headship and authority, and went on to being the patriarch of the Israelites – not Esau. Solomon is another example... not David’s first born, but rather 10th in line of sons, and yet – he was the firstborn in his headship and authority – the one chosen to receive the throne from David. So it isn’t a birth order, but the authority He received.... Something angels never receive, in fact, they are subject to Him.

#### **4. JESUS WILL RULE FOREVER; ANGELS ARE HIS SUBJECTS**

The writer again presses the point about the distinction between angels and Jesus, the Son. In verse 7, we read how God makes His angels spirits, or winds it also says... and this comes from (4) Psalm 104:4... and they are called His servants which are flames of fire. These are references to angels being spiritual beings who move swiftly, rapidly like wind, but also powerfully like flames of fire carrying out God's purposes or judgements – think about Sodom, think about when an angel destroyed the Assyrian army, think about the angels of judgement in Revelation. And the writer here is saying, the angels are simply servants, ministers, created beings.... But about the Son He says.... See the difference?

And in verses 8-9 he uses (5) Psalm 45:6-7 to show how it speaks about Jesus ruling on a throne forever, and He is called God. The author is making the point that no angel has ever been given this authority or right or privilege – they are servants – but this Jesus, He is different, He is the ruler, the King of this kingdom. 1 Peter 3:22 says “Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.” And in Revelation 19:16, we are told that He is coming again, and on His robe and on His thigh will be this name written: King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And verse 13 is from (6) Psalm 110:1 – to which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit on my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”? None! Only Jesus sits at God's right hand which is the position of power and rulership. In fact, angels generally are not sitting – they stand, they minister, they serve, they defend, they protect... and Christ reigns as ruler seated on a throne.

#### **5. JESUS IS THE CREATOR; ANGELS WERE CREATED**

Then in verses 10-12, the author further supports Christ as the eternal creator of all things by quoting (7) Psalm 102:25-27. No angel was ever involved in creating things, instead they were created beings as we mentioned earlier. Angels are created beings, and Jesus is the creator of angels. Colossians 1:15-17 says, 15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. And Psalm 148 says that God created angels (v.2,5).

Now, we know that angels were created already when God created the earth because in Job 38:4-7, we are told that the angels sang and shouted for joy when God laid the foundation of the earth. And so powerful is Jesus, that as the Creator of all things, the day is coming when this heaven and earth will wear out and He will create a new heaven and a new earth... as we have recently studied in Revelation 21.

#### **CONCLUSION**

And so, in these first 14 verses, the Holy Spirit has shown the deity of Jesus Christ through His divine names – Son, Lord and God; through his divine works – He creates, reveals, sustains, redeems, and He rules. And He is the One to be worshipped by the angels, and by all the creatures in the universe.... Which includes you and me. And so, after all these truths of Jesus have been laid out to us, we dare not turn our backs on Christ. We are to receive Him, to believe in Him as Lord and Saviour. Let's pray.